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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. TSHERING	(Bhutan)
later:	Ms. ALVAREZ (Vice-Chairman)	(Dominican Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 106: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued) (A/50/254-S/1995/501, A/50/345, A/50/373, A/50/375, A/50/432 and A/50/433)

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1. Mr. ELDEEB (Egypt), speaking on agenda item 106, said that Egypt attached great importance to the question of crime prevention and criminal justice. Its domestic policies were centred entirely on stability and justice for all. In the judicial and penal system, emphasis was placed on the application of the law to all citizens without discrimination, and on the rule of law. His Government believed that only respect for justice and individual rights could guarantee social stability. On the basis of that principle, which was fully in conformity with the teachings of Islam, Egypt was determined to combat any breach of the peace, particularly terrorism and organized crime.

2. It was in that spirit that Egypt had hosted the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, at Cairo. More than 130 countries had taken part in the Congress, which had been the first of its kind to be held on the African continent. The recommendations it had adopted included one calling for the establishment of a regional centre for training and research in crime prevention and criminal justice for the Mediterranean States. Egypt attached great importance to that project, which should respond to the needs of the countries of the region at a time when crime constituted a growing threat. He hoped that the open-ended intergovernmental working group which was to be set up by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in order to consider the question would study all aspects of the establishment of such a centre, as well as the question of cooperation between the centre and United Nations organs.

3. His delegation also supported the decision to establish an open-ended intergovernmental working group to study measures to combat organized transnational crime, including the drafting of a code of conduct which would take due account of the links between organized crime and terrorism. Lastly, it hoped that draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.3, concerning the Ninth Congress, which had already been adopted by the Economic and Social Council, would be the object of a broad consensus.

4. His delegation supported the proposal that the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch should be upgraded to a division. It placed particular emphasis on the importance of the technical assistance provided by the Branch and the need to provide it with the necessary resources. His delegation was also concerned about the financial difficulties facing the United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, since those difficulties jeopardized regional cooperation at a time when the latter was more vital than ever in order to deal with the increase in organized crime and terrorism.

5. His delegation had closely examined document A/50/433, which showed the importance of the results obtained at the Naples Conference. It was essential that the momentum created by the Conference should be maintained, and that the Political Declaration which it had adopted should be implemented through the mobilization of the necessary resources and capacities.

6. Referring to agenda item 108, he said that the numerous resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and by the Economic and Social Council regarding the issue of drugs showed that the international community was well aware of the terrible danger which it faced from the trafficking and consumption of narcotic drugs. Intentions were, however, not enough; it was essential for all countries, both North and South, to mobilize, and for activities in the context of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme to be better coordinated. It was also vital that all countries should accede to the international conventions on narcotic drugs. Finally, the problem of financing should not be an obstacle. Despite the meagre resources available to it, Egypt was participating directly in the implementation of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and it intended to continue to do so, whatever economic difficulties it might face. In that connection, his delegation renewed its appeal to donor countries and the financial institutions to contribute generously to activities to combat drugs, on the understanding that drug control activities should not serve as a pretext for interference in the internal affairs of States.

7. Egypt was grateful to United Nations bodies, particularly the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization, for their work in the prevention of drug abuse and the treatment of drug addicts. The World Health Organization had produced valuable documentation in Arabic on the rehabilitation of addicts; that type of assistance was most useful.

8. Mr. SAHRAOUI (Algeria) said that his delegation supported the remarks made by the representative of Egypt concerning the proposal for a change in the status of the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch. His delegation agreed that it should be upgraded to a division.

9. Miss DURRANT (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the 13 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on agenda item 108, noted that 1995 marked the mid-point of the United Nations Decade against Drug Abuse 1991-2000 and commended the Organization for its activities in that field, which had resulted, inter alia, in the adoption of various conventions designed to combat the illicit trafficking in and abuse of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. She also specifically wished to express appreciation to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) for their efforts in assisting countries to implement the provisions of those conventions and in combating the drug menace at all levels.

10. Despite that remarkable cooperation and despite the political will on the part of most States, both drug trafficking and drug addiction were increasing and drug traffickers had vast financial resources at their disposal. The problem should be addressed seriously, starting with young persons, who were the main victims. Steps had already been taken in that direction, particularly in

the context of an international conference on "Sports against Drugs", organized jointly by UNDCP and the International Olympic Committee and held in February 1995 in Rome. The involvement in the campaign of world-famous athletes as Goodwill Ambassadors should also be mentioned. Prevention and rehabilitation programmes were also effective and were currently being developed for Caribbean countries in collaboration with UNDCP and the International Labour Organization. In addition, UNDCP was assisting Governments in the establishment of drug detection laboratories and the development of qualified staff.

11. The CARICOM countries had recently enacted legislation to increase penalties for drug trafficking and the possession of illegal drugs, entered into mutual legal assistance treaties with other States, and strengthened security at ports of entry. In addition, Governments in the region were collaborating with the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF), which had its headquarters at Port-of-Spain, to tackle the problem of money-laundering. Much more remained to be done, however, and, in that connection, the States members of CARICOM called for increased international cooperation.

12. The CARICOM States were ideally situated for use by the international drug cartels as transshipment points. Moreover, the smugglers had sought to take advantage of the multilinguistic and historical ties between the Caribbean and certain South American, North American and European countries with a view to developing illicit trafficking by sea. The intensification of such activities, which led to drug consumption problems locally since not all the drugs were exported, placed severe pressures on the economies of the CARICOM countries. Governments were therefore forced to spend a significant portion of their scarce resources on law enforcement and the policing of coasts and territorial waters, as well as on the rehabilitation of drug addicts, who, unfortunately, were often young.

13. The CARICOM countries were pleased that the recent discussion of the Working Group on Maritime Cooperation, convened by the Executive Director of UNDCP, had resulted in recommendations aimed at enhancing implementation of article 17 of the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, recommendations which had been endorsed by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its thirty-eighth session.

14. According to the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/460), UNDCP should continue to promote subregional cooperation in drug control matters. In that regard, CARICOM was pleased to note that, in May 1995, an agreement had been signed with UNDCP for the establishment, in Jamaica, of a regional drug training centre in the Caribbean. Moreover, in forums such as the Seventh Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEA), which had just taken place in Havana, the CARICOM countries had succeeded in increasing their cooperation by sharing some of their scarce resources and exchanging information.

15. In that same report, the Secretary-General had also pointed out that, in adopting the Global Programme of Action, the General Assembly had recognized the need to allocate the necessary resources for drug control activities. The CARICOM countries were therefore very disappointed that the budget for the biennium 1996-1997 reflected a decrease from the previous budget of some

26 per cent, largely as a result of an overall decline in voluntary contributions. The commitment made by the international community to combat drugs should be reflected in the budgetary allocations for UNDCP. She therefore hoped that the matter could be addressed during the current debate on the budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

16. Article 10 of the 1988 Convention, concerning international cooperation and assistance to transit States, was of particular importance to the CARICOM countries for obvious reasons: transit States were an important link in the drug network chain and their significance could not be ignored or the war against illicit drugs would be lost before it had even started. The CARICOM States therefore urged major donors, as well as the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and other competent United Nations bodies, to devote special attention to article 10, and also urged UNDCP to expand its "debt-for-drugs" swap to include debt relief for transit countries in order to improve the efforts of those countries in combating the illicit drug trade.

17. The CARICOM States supported the convening of a second International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in 1997 to assess the situation of international cooperation and promote the adoption of concrete measures aimed at strengthening that cooperation.

18. The CARICOM States were pleased to observe that a balanced approach was being taken in the fight against drugs and that, at its thirty-eighth session, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs had requested UNDCP to define a global strategy for demand reduction. They looked forward to receiving the report on that matter. They also welcomed the continued attention being given by the Commission to the role of alternative development, in particular, by encouraging farmers to produce substitute crops with a view to reducing the drug supply, and they urged the more widespread implementation of programmes which utilized that crucial concept. The resolutions adopted by the Commission at its thirty-eighth session underscored its full appreciation of the need to combat drug abuse by addressing the socio-economic issues involved. The CARICOM States wished to reiterate that, in designing national, regional and global programmes and strategies, greater emphasis should be placed on examining the obvious linkages between poverty and illicit drug trafficking in developing countries.

19. Mr. SCHORER (Israel), speaking on agenda item 108, said that Israel shared the concern of the international community regarding the threat of drugs. Israel was a party to the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 and the Protocol thereto, as well as to the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, and planned shortly to ratify the 1988 Convention. In addition, it was intensifying its efforts to establish international cooperation.

20. Israel believed that the international community should adopt a tougher approach regarding the use of heroin. It also recommended the establishment, in each country, of a central database on traffickers and intervention methods. Similarly, a regional and international information centre for the exchange of know-how on intervention methods should be established. Israel had already established such a database.

21. The establishment of peace in the Middle East would enable Israel to develop its cooperation with its neighbours, a cooperation which had already been facilitated by the consistent efforts of Mr. Giacomelli. In that connection, the most notable events, which would make the year 1995 remembered as a historic year, were the primary importance accorded under the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty to the need to combat illicit drugs, and the first subregional technical meeting on drug control, which had brought together, under UNDCP auspices, representatives of Egypt, Jordan and Israel, as well as the Palestinians, with a view to launching a coordinated effort to stem the flow of drugs into the Middle East. He hoped that the time would come when all countries of the Middle East would work together to combat the scourge of drugs, which threatened the well-being of the peoples in the region. Israel had also commenced cooperation with several former Soviet Republics, notably Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

22. In Israel, the Anti-Drug Authority (ADA) was working to improve controls along borders and points of passage and was promoting increasingly severe penalties for drug traffickers. While the use of interdictory and enforcement measures to eliminate supply had played a key role in that area, emphasis was also being placed on reducing demand. Educational programmes on drug abuse were currently offered in 40 per cent of the schools and would ultimately be available in all schools. Treatment and rehabilitation services had been improved and research on drug abuse was being encouraged. Special emphasis was currently being placed on the treatment of teenagers. Youth was also being mobilized under a special ADA programme. There were also general activities in the areas of public information and prevention, including televised anti-drug messages broadcast on the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking and throughout the school year, mass media campaigns and a Community Action Programme.

23. However, subregional, regional and international cooperation was the only way to halt the spread of the drug scourge. In 1996, Israel would be hosting an international conference on the theme "The war against drugs in an era of peace" and hoped to share its knowledge and experience with other countries on that occasion.

24. Mrs. Álvarez (Dominican Republic), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

25. Mr. De ROJAS (Venezuela), speaking on agenda item 108, said that his country was deeply concerned by the scope of corruption present in public and private administrations and by the ties between such corruption and drug trafficking.

26. His country welcomed with satisfaction the report presented by the Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its thirty-eighth session concerning, inter alia, the discussions in the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Advisory Group when it met in Vienna in August and November 1994. It also welcomed the fact that, in its resolution 13 (XXXVIII), on the status of international cooperation to combat the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, the Commission had

requested Member States to inform the Executive Director, before 1 December 1995, of their views on the recommendations contained in his report.

27. During the ninth meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group, held at Quito, Ecuador, in September 1995, the States members of the Rio Group had renewed their firm commitment to combating the illicit consumption, production and trafficking in drugs. They had also considered it indispensable to find a comprehensive solution which would embrace the social and economic aspects of that scourge and to make commitments which would lead to a significant and verifiable drop in consumption and a substantial reduction in supply.

28. The States members of the Rio Group took the view that it was necessary to take active measures against money laundering, distribution networks, weapons trafficking and illicit trafficking in chemical precursors. They also endorsed the elaboration of an inter-American convention against money laundering. They pledged to work together to ensure that the main consumer countries assumed greater responsibility for solving that problem. They also agreed to hold a special meeting of the Rio Group in Panama during the first quarter of 1996 to consider the creation of a centre for combating drug trafficking and related offences, the headquarters of which would be in Panama.

29. To meet the drug challenge, international cooperation must be systematic and reciprocal.

30. Mr. ZIAUDDIN (Bangladesh) said that his country accorded high priority to implementation of the Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan and fully endorsed the decisions taken at the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. The political will demonstrated at those two meetings should strengthen international cooperation and help countries meet the challenge posed by organized transnational crime. In Naples and in Cairo, there had been recognition of the need to strengthen States' capacity to deal with that constantly growing phenomenon. In particular, it was essential to prevent developing countries, which were vulnerable in terms of resources and means, from becoming sanctuaries for organized crime and transnational crime. At the Congress in Cairo, a consensus had emerged on the need to elaborate technical assistance programmes, set up mechanisms for the gathering and exchange of information and strengthen training programmes for law enforcement and criminal justice personnel. His delegation fully endorsed in particular the omnibus resolution adopted at the Congress which dealt with key concerns ranging from economic crime to juvenile delinquency. In that connection, he wished to underscore the need to bring the juvenile justice system into line with United Nations standards in that field.

31. Bangladesh welcomed the suggestion made at the Naples Conference to consider the possibility of elaborating a convention against organized international crime. The recommendations contained in the annex to resolution 3 of the Cairo Congress could serve as a basis for the formulation of provisions in that regard. His delegation also shared the views expressed at the Ninth Congress with regard to the need to place greater emphasis on the protection of victims of crime. It also endorsed the Secretary-General's suggestion to consider the possibility of elaborating an international convention on illicit

trafficking in children. Such a convention should include the issue of sex tourism involving children. His own country had made special efforts to reform its criminal justice system so that it would be better equipped to combat organized crime, whether it involved drug trafficking, the use of firearms or trafficking in women and children. Its actions were part of measures taken at the regional level by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

32. Development was the best way to prevent crime. Crime flourished in the presence of poverty, deprivation, underdevelopment, unemployment and the absence of education and opportunities. Lastly, while Member States must take the necessary steps to combat crime, it was equally important to strengthen multilateral efforts to improve law enforcement and criminal justice systems, by means of technical assistance, training and the collection and exchange of information. United Nations programmes had an important role to play in that regard, particularly in the developing countries. As had been noted at the Congress, international financial institutions should extend their support to programmes and activities devoted to crime prevention.

33. Mr. XIE Bohua (China) said that organized transnational crime threatened regional and global stability and development. The Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders, held in Cairo in April and May 1995, had afforded an opportunity to explore trends in crime and to exchange experiences in that field. The Congress had reached a high degree of consensus on the urgent need to strengthen measures to counter criminal activities. China hoped that the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and all Governments would adopt practical measures to achieve the goal of security for all as declared at the Congress.

34. Criminal activities often transcended national boundaries, making it imperative that international cooperation should be strengthened. Unfortunately, the lack of financial resources and technology limited the ability of developing countries to combat crime, which not only harmed their vital interests and social development but also had repercussions on regional and global stability. The United Nations and the international community as a whole should therefore make it a priority to provide those countries, on a basis of equality and respect for the principle of State sovereignty, with financial resources and technical assistance which would allow them to combat crime, build a stable society and create an environment favourable to development.

35. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice had made great efforts to ensure the dissemination and implementation of the United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice, to facilitate crime prevention and control and to deal with the human rights of both victims and criminals more effectively. It was to be hoped that the Commission would receive sufficient resources to ensure that the resolutions and recommendations of the Congress were followed up and that the Commission would be able to coordinate its work with other relevant United Nations bodies in order to avoid overlapping.

36. In recent years the Chinese Government had been improving its own criminal justice legislation, strengthening its cooperation with the judicial authorities

of other countries and taking an active part in the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme. China had signed treaties on judicial assistance with 20 countries and extradition treaties with three others. It was ready to cooperate further with other countries in presenting a united front against organized transnational crime.

37. Ms. EL-KABBAJ (Morocco) said that, faced with the increase in organized transnational crime and the threat it posed to every country, especially the developing countries, the international community should adopt a many-sided approach as part of a global strategy of anti-crime activity, prevention and cooperation. It might be useful to supplement the international legal arsenal with an instrument such as a convention on organized transnational crime, whose main goal would be to safeguard public safety and social peace. The Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan and the recommendations of the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders had to be translated into practical action.

38. The emergence of juvenile criminality imposed new responsibilities on States, such as regulating the use of and putting an end to illicit trafficking in firearms.

39. In the developing countries, rapid and unplanned urbanization and unemployment, contributed directly to the rise in crime, as a result of the limited ability of States to carry out the numerous tasks associated with social development. And that pointed to the close relationship between underdevelopment and crime: States needed technical assistance in order to modernize their criminal justice systems.

40. Since organized crime tended to take shelter in the developing countries, the countries of the North should intensify their cooperation with the countries of the South in the areas of training and exchanges of experience and technology. The United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme had an essential role to play in that respect and should be strengthened. The necessary resources must therefore be made available to it, as well as to the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch.

41. The functional link between organized crime and drug trafficking exacerbated the social evils of corruption, terrorism and illicit financial and commercial activities. The spectacular expansion of the drug trade, with a monetary value exceeding that of the oil industry, posed a direct threat to the well-being of 100 million people throughout the world. Moreover, 50 per cent of cases of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) were believed to be linked to drug use.

42. Besides its harmful effects on the individual, drug abuse represented a major handicap to economic and social development, lowering productivity and imposing a heavy burden on health-care facilities and social service agencies. The dramatic extent of the problem should lead the international community to establish a system of close collaboration between producer and consumer countries in accordance with the principle of collective responsibility. The situation would only improve in the long run if the demand for drugs was reduced

and if profitable alternative crops were introduced with the help of the international financial institutions.

43. Mr. NAJEM (Lebanon), speaking on the question of narcotic drugs, said that even during its recent war, Lebanon had spared no effort to stop the production, trafficking and use of drugs in regions which had largely evaded control by the Lebanese authorities at the time. Lebanon had always been an active member of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, and since peace had been restored, one of its major concerns, apart from extending its control over the whole of the territory as a result of the Taif Agreement, had been to take all necessary steps to combat drugs. Lebanon was party to all the international anti-drug conventions and implemented their provisions strictly. The Lebanese Government was currently preparing a bill which would outlaw money laundering.

44. In the previous five years, the Government had eliminated all crops used in the production of drugs in the Bekaa valley. As a result of action by the security forces, the army and the customs services, huge quantities of narcotics had been seized and many traffickers had been arrested. In 1994, 40 tons of hashish had been confiscated together with large quantities of cocaine and heroin, and 1,000 people involved in the trafficking and sale of drugs had been arrested. The Government had strengthened the criminal investigation department which headed the anti-drug campaign by providing it with four branch offices in the most important Lebanese towns, and it had closed all clandestine ports. Lastly, it had managed to eliminate almost all the networks of drug traffickers and was currently drafting laws which would impose particularly severe penalties on people involved in drug production and trafficking. International missions which had been to Lebanon had ascertained that the Lebanese Government had spared no effort in its fight against drugs, and the International Narcotics Control Board had noted in one of its reports that the crops used in the production of drugs had been completely eliminated.

45. The problem now facing Lebanon was how to redress the economic and social situation created by the elimination of crops used in the production of drugs. A rural development plan for the Baalbek region and Harmel had been drawn up following the Paris conference in June 1995, but it had not yet been implemented. Accordingly, Lebanon had asked the Governments of friendly countries and especially the Governments of countries with experience of the drug problem, to provide it with financial and technical assistance. Such assistance would allow the country to develop an alternative economy in the regions where drugs had become the main source of income, establish health-care facilities and drug rehabilitation programmes and, in general, continue its efforts in the economic and social field.

46. Mr. OSMANI (Afghanistan), speaking on agenda items 106 and 108, said that for countries that had undergone major socio-economic disruptions, the re-establishment of peace, stability and security was vital. Afghanistan therefore welcomed the proposal of the Secretary-General in documents A/50/432 and A/50/433 to upgrade the operational capacity of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme in areas such as national institution-building, training of personnel, promotion of reform consonant with local traditions, mitigation of ethnic conflicts through mediation or other types of conflict resolution, and assistance to victims of civil strife. Afghanistan

hoped that the United Nations would be able to assist countries in need, and would also welcome proposals from other countries for joint strategies in areas of mutual concern.

47. Fully aware of the destructive consequences of the illegal use of narcotic drugs, the Islamic State of Afghanistan was determined to combat drug abuse. For three years a High State Commission directly responsible to the Office of the President had been in charge of preventing the production, smuggling and abuse of drugs; prevention campaigns combining the use of education and mass media, with the active involvement of religious figures, scholars, lawyers, writers and journalists, had been launched; finally, Afghan security forces, in their fight against drugs, had confiscated or destroyed large quantities of cannabis, opium and heroin between 1993 and 1995.

48. He wished to give a clear account of the controversial situation concerning poppy-growing in Afghanistan. Traditionally such activity had always been on a minute scale and the opium produced had been used by the people as medicine. The long periods of war and the lack of a consolidated prevention programme had changed the situation and allowed dealers and smugglers to encourage the poverty-stricken farmers to cultivate the poppy, especially in frontier regions. Poppy-growing could also be explained by the destruction of the irrigation system by the foreign aggressor and the presence of land-mines, which had reduced the amount of arable land.

49. The main elements in any strategy to put an end to poppy-growing should be to provide alternative income or livelihood for the local populations which would guarantee them a decent quality of life. In light of the above, Afghanistan felt strongly that the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) in Afghanistan should have taken up and still should take up the question of poppy-growing with the Afghan Government and the High State Commission, while taking into consideration the poverty of the population and the plight of the war-stricken country. Indeed, it was clear from the results so far achieved by UNDCP, according to the Programme's own statistics, that despite the spending of considerable amounts through the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which were trying to end poppy-growing, poppy production, far from dropping, had increased from 2,600 tons in 1993 to 3,600 tons in 1994. Although not questioning its cooperation with regional and international organizations, the Afghan Government did not approve of the manner in which financial aid from UNDCP had been provided, and was convinced that if the NGOs had cooperated with it or if financial assistance had been allocated directly to the High State Commission the results would have been much better.

50. The High State Commission had a master plan to eradicate the cultivation of the poppy but lacked the necessary financial resources to implement the plan. The Islamic State of Afghanistan would welcome any assistance that could be provided for implementing the master plan as well as for developing country-specific strategies. It also needed technical assistance in training law enforcement agencies and providing specialized medical treatment services for drug users. It was Afghanistan's fervent hope that UNDCP would open an office in Kabul to facilitate work on that task.

51. Mr. GUTIÉRREZ (Costa Rica) said that his country attached great importance to crime prevention and criminal justice as fundamental elements of the social peace and rule of law which it had established. The globalization of organized crime which went hand-in-hand with the globalization of the economy and of trade, and the threat that it posed to public safety and improvement of the quality of life, especially in developing countries, had led Costa Rica to urgently request the setting-up of a coordination mechanism within the United Nations system so that countries which needed assistance in their fight against crime would receive it.

52. The Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch of the Secretariat was of great help. It was planning new global strategies to meet the challenge of the growth in organized transnational crime, providing technical cooperation services, gathering and distributing information, and organizing training activities. However, the imbalance between the increasing responsibilities that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council had given that Branch and the institutional and financial means at its disposal could not be ignored, especially in the light of the growing crime rate, which was directly related to the tremendous corrupting power and the increasingly sophisticated methods of criminal organizations. That imbalance more than justified the Secretary-General's proposal in his proposed programme budget for the 1996-1997 biennium, by which the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch would become a division. Costa Rica invited the States represented in the Third Committee to endorse that proposal before section 13 of the programme budget, describing the activities of the Branch, was approved in the Fifth Committee and then in the plenary Assembly, so that the new division would have the resources necessary to function adequately.

53. Mr. OTUYELU (Nigeria), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, noted that the United States representative, in his statement on item 106, Crime prevention and criminal justice, had used that item as a pretext for criticism of Nigeria. The United States representative had spoken of swindles and frauds when referring to Nigeria. He pointed out that Nigeria had some 100 million people and that only a small percentage of them were involved in illicit activities. The swindles and frauds mentioned by the United States representative had been investigated and most of the persons implicated had turned out to be United States citizens. The investigations had also revealed that foreign agents were trying to corrupt Nigerian citizens and involve them in fraudulent activities.

54. Nigeria was of the opinion that such attacks against it or any other countries did not serve the objective decided upon by the international community, that being the fight against a scourge - crime - which affected all countries and against which the international community needed to be united in a common front.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.